

SOCIAL ACTION

OCTOBER 15, 1950

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Decisions Christians Face in the World Crisis:

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**OUR UNRECOGNIZED GOVERNMENTAL
CRISIS . . .** By E. E. Schattschneider

SOCIAL ACTION

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The Unlimited Possibilities of Politics

"There are no 'problems of democracy.' Democracy is here, and that is all there is to it." This dogmatic assertion, overheard by chance as a scrap of conversation, too often seems to represent the opinion of many Christian laymen. This point of view is probably an excuse to forestall being called upon for thinking or action.

Present-day, professing Christians in this country have a greater responsibility for practicing democracy than is generally realized. It is only in countries of Christian background like our own that the principles of self-government by free men have developed. In all other lands democracy is stifled by pressures applied by the few who control, and who arrogate to themselves the sole right to judge what is right.

By drawing their cloaks around them and "passing by on the other side" because "politics are dirty" Christian laymen have violated the basic precepts of their beliefs. They have made it possible for pressure groups, representing one segment of society alone, to defraud the country.

In this issue of *Social Action*, Dr. E. E. Schattschneider points out very clearly the imperative necessity for the majority to regain its power of control over government, and makes it equally clear that government activity has now become universal through the necessity for satisfying universal needs. Truly *national* parties must serve our modern requirements.

Every layman ought to consider prayerfully the five illusions about politics and political parties which are so succinctly discussed by Dr. Schattschneider. Only when we abandon the role of "independents," who are not really unfettered at all, and act as intelligent party members can democracy function for everyone, for it is true that organized groups alone seem to be successful. As long as it can be said that it is not 150,000,000 citizens who work for democracy, but a mere 500,000 party workers who really count, we cannot, as Christian laymen, escape from a sense of guilt for our shortcomings.

As much effort expended on our political activities as we freely give to our economic transactions and reluctantly grant in the spiritual realm would transform our country. There would be few limits beyond which we could not go.

—ANDREW E. NUQUIST

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Our Unrecognized Governmental Crisis

By E. E. Schattschneider

The conflagration in Korea throws a disturbing light on all of our calculations concerning the future. At the end of one of the most anxious summers in American history we ask ourselves: What can we *do* to control the dangerous events and tendencies that threaten our civilization? Are the events of this summer so cataclysmic that we have lost the power to act?

A little reflection will show that four-fifths of the world's population has indeed already lost the power to influence the course of events. This is certainly true of the 700,000,000 people living in Russia and in the satellite countries under Soviet domination or influence. It is largely true of great numbers of people living outside the iron curtain under governments that have never been well democratized—India, Indonesia, Indo-China, Burma, the Philippines, much of Africa, Spain, and Latin America. Automatically excluded from influence also are 150,000,000 people living in the occupied countries. Unfortunately the capacity of some of the oldest and best democracies in the world, the democracies of Western Europe, to control their foreign relations is now greatly diminished by the fact that they live under the shadow of superpowers so great that the struggle for national survival must often seem futile. Overwhelming numbers of the human race have already lost control of their destiny either because they cannot manage their own governments or because their governments are too feeble to take the initiative or to support an independent policy.

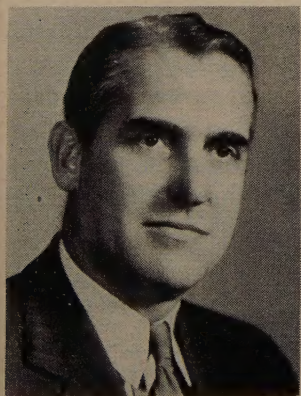
The responsibility of ordinary Americans for what becomes of the human race in the next twenty-five years grows out of the fact that only in the United States is to be found that combination of democratic institutions and the resources and technology necessary to cope with the forces that threaten to destroy or to

subjugate mankind. This union of democracy and power makes the state of opinion, the morale, and the sense of responsibility of the American people the decisive factor in the world situation. Only in the United States do ordinary people retain the power to make the decisions that are likely to shape the future.

Fundamental Difficulty Is Political

For Americans the burdens and anxieties resulting from the new place of the United States in an unsettled world offer the sharpest challenge in our history. Whatever else we may do we cannot afford to drift. How do we prepare ourselves to deal with the stupendous difficulties of the situation? The problem is not merely one of military preparation, nor is it fundamentally one of economics. When we consider what we may do about the problem we are sure to discover sooner or later that the fundamental difficulty is *political*. There is no way out of our difficulties except through governmental action; what we do about the future of the human race we do through the government of the United States.

The war in Korea does little more than highlight a developing crisis in American government that has been a generation in the making, a crisis that touches all aspects of public policy, domestic as well as foreign. It has been said that war accelerates



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the process of change. It might be said equally well that it magnifies and makes visible difficulties and weaknesses in institutions and structures that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. The war is merely the most dramatic, the most urgent, and in some ways the most typical of the assignments given the government in recent decades. Broadly, foreign and domestic policy are inseparable. In both the demands now made on our political institutions are unprecedented.

Grand Strategy for Politics

A reconsideration of the grand strategy of American politics is now necessary. Neither the governmental structure nor the political system of the country is well adapted to handle the problems arising from a public undertaking to stabilize or to mobilize the economy, to integrate foreign and domestic policy on a wide scale. The existing government structure is better suited to obstruction than to the making of wide and rapid adjustments. It tends to give excessive recognition to local and special interests at the expense of the general interests. Modern policies are worked out with great difficulty in a disintegrated governmental structure driven by an amorphous mass of interested minorities under circumstances more conducive to nervous prostration than to mobility and decision. The imposition of unprecedented burdens on a structure designed for another age has produced an *invisible governmental crisis*. Behind the confusion in American government is a basic *political weakness* which Americans must remedy if they are to survive in a dangerous world. It is the purpose of this article to analyze the political weaknesses of American government and to suggest some measures that might be taken to overcome these defects in the system.

The Revolution in Public Policy

The political weakness of the governmental system seemed unimportant a generation ago when the involvement of ordinary citizens in national policy was incidental and minor. In the past

four decades, however, American policy has undergone a profound revolution. That there has been a change of policy is obvious; what few people realize is the extent of the transformation. Thirty-five years ago William Howard Taft foresaw with alarm the possibility that some future Congress might appropriate a billion dollars. A "billion-dollar Congress" is what he called it. Now, a later Mr. Taft thinks it likely that we shall have an indefinite series of sixty-billion-dollar congresses.

Indicative of the scope of contemporary policy is the increase in the number of income tax returns, from one-third of a million in 1916 to forty-three million in 1945. The broadened impact of public policy is suggested also by the social security system which now has a coverage of about 45,000,000 persons. As a matter of fact, *the scope of policy tends to become universal*.

The activities of the national government are now very closely related to the dominant anxieties of the modern world: war, peace, security, health, depressions, unemployment, prosperity, old age, housing, education, and poverty. These are precisely the things that concern us most deeply. If we agree that a government is what it does, the national government now bears little resemblance to the government once headed by Grover Cleveland or William McKinley.

Before World War I, the federal government concerned itself with such matters as the Federal Reserve System, the tariff, anti-trust legislation, pure food and drug legislation, and the conservation of natural resources.*

*The Republican platform of 1908 contained planks concerning the following subjects: tariff, currency, postal savings, trusts, railroads, railroad and government employees, wage-earners (minor legislation regarding safety, etc.), judicial procedure, farmers ("good country roads maintained more and more largely at public expense"), rights of the Negro ("equal justice for all men"), natural resources and waterways, army and navy, protection of American citizens abroad, foreign commerce, the Hague treaties, merchant marine, veterans, civil service, public health, a bureau of mines, and the territories. In these fields the platform proposed usually only minor modifications of existing legislation.

Concerning public health the platform declared: "We commend the efforts designed to secure greater efficiency in national public health agencies and favor such legislation as will effect this purpose." (Compare current discussions of national health insurance!)

This legislation characteristically affected directly only a very small fraction of the population of the country and its indirect consequences were conjectural or invisible. Even federal taxation was indirect and painless. The defense establishments were extremely small and personnel for the armed forces was recruited entirely by a system of voluntary enlistments. Aside from the postal service and the fact that federal currency was used universally, it is doubtful if the federal government touched directly in the course of its ordinary operations much more than two million American citizens in any one year. Since 1914 the scope and intensity of the operations of the federal government have increased perhaps as much as fifty or one hundred times.*

Back of this stupendous transformation of policy are massive changes in our society, suggested by words such as industrialization, urbanization, mass production, the revolution in transportation and communications, modern technology, and the new world position of the United States. A consideration of these factors suggests that no reversal of current trends in American government is likely in the foreseeable future.

Difficulties in Governmental Operation

These developments have given rise to unprecedented difficulties in the operation of the government. The distinguishing quality of the new assignment is not so much the size of the new administrative establishment or the number of individual transactions that must be performed as the necessity for integrating manifold activities into coherent programs, timing them correctly, and achieving a balance among the most pressing domestic and international demands made on the government.

Among the prerequisites of modern public policy perhaps the

*It is not possible to determine exactly how many people were contacted by the federal government in a typical prewar year such as 1915. The federal district courts handled 26,000 civil and criminal cases. The total number of federal prisoners in June, 1915 was 4,021. Most of the federal agencies dealt directly with very small, special groups of people. See C. H. Woody, *Growth of the Federal Government, 1915-1932* (New York: 1934), for a breakdown of the work of the federal agencies.

*Acme*

Secretary of State Acheson testifies before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, urging approval of President Truman's arms program. Even when the administration party has a majority in Congress traditional party structure does not assure coordinated policy.

most difficult to meet, as the Korean War has indicated, is the demand that action be taken with foresight on a very wide front in response to situations remote in time and space. More specifically, the new role of American government demands an unaccustomed degree of cooperation between the executive and legislative branches of the government and an equally remarkable integration of the activities of many agencies not accustomed to close cooperation. It is now necessary to establish comprehensive policies which are likely to succeed only if they are adopted in time, and are consistently supported throughout.

Speaking of foreign policy today, Mr. Acheson has said, "It means that all branches of the government must work closely together."* This is something new, a far cry from the temper

*See Mr. Acheson's statement on "total diplomacy," *Life*, Vol. 28, No. 11 (March 13, 1950).

in which President Taft wrote in the placid days before World War I that deadlocks in American government were a good thing in themselves because they meant that for a period of time we did nothing at all.

Necessity for Integrated Policy

Probably the least significant consequence of the new policy of the government has been a substantial increase in the *size* of the bureaucracy. Greater difficulties have developed at the highest levels of the government, *at the level of the over-all management of the whole establishment, the point at which it becomes necessary to coordinate and integrate the complex activities of a very large number of agencies and services.*

The first attempts to cope with these top level difficulties have taken the form of a series of administrative and procedural reforms with which the public is now familiar: the development of the budget, a series of great studies of the administrative establishment culminating in the work of the Hoover Commission, the Employment Act of 1946 which attempted to set up machinery for the coordination of economic policy, the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, and the National Security Act of 1947. These measures show where the strains in the system have been felt most acutely and illustrate the kind of effort that has been made in recent years to increase the capacity of the government to organize its operations around general programs and policies. In short, a great attempt has been made to help the President and Congress to stay on top of their jobs.

Failure to Mobilize the Majority

It is now clear, however, that the problems created by the development of American public policy cannot be dealt with by a mere reorganization of the internal procedures of the government. The trouble is not fundamentally a question of legislative procedure or administrative organization. The source of difficulties is to be found in the failure to mobilize the power of the majority over the government. To meet this difficulty,

a democratic political solution of the problem of power must be found.

Something of the nature of the political problem can be understood when it is realized that the expanding scope of public policy has brought literally millions of Americans into close relations with the national government for the first time in American history. The political consequences of this development are likely to be remarkably great. Yet the existing political organization of the country which grew up long before World War I is very badly prepared to capitalize on the new market for politics to be found in the expanded constituency of the government.

The Two Basic Political Problems

The political problems produced by the policy revolution may be summed up in two questions:

- (1) How can we create a political base for the integration and close cooperation of all branches of the government now necessary to enable the government to function?
- (2) How can the government maintain the kind of political contact with its greatly expanded constituency that is necessary for the support of its policies?

If we think of these problems exclusively as a question of the internal procedures of the government, we are likely to find ourselves with an undemocratic solution; usually this takes the form of proposals to strengthen the executive as a cure for all ills. On the other hand, if the unorganized democratic process results merely in a continuing conflict within the government (the conflict between Congress and the President, for example), the pressure for an undemocratic solution may become irresistible. The outcome of the attempt to find a political solution for these problems will be important to all of us.

Is a Solution Possible?

Is it possible to find a political solution? Is it possible for ordinary Americans to have something to say about the way in which a solution is attempted? If we assume that we can create

our own political institutions (that is to say, if we are as optimistic about politics as people are about industry, science, and education, for example) we are bound to assume that we can shape our political institutions to fit our needs if we have the intelligence, the moral will and the energy to do the work involved. I believe emphatically that it is *possible* to find a political solution. Democracy is a governmental system designed to maximize political opportunities. The basic proposition of this article is that the potentialities of American politics are almost unlimited. Whether or not we capitalize on our opportunities depends on our capacity for intelligent action. We are defeated, in part, because the people who think and do not act never seem to meet the people who act without thinking.

Any attempt to work out a solution requires some understanding of politics. The influence of the people of the United States on the government does not flow automatically from the fact that we have an opportunity to use the incidental apparatus of democracy, such as popular elections and universal suffrage. It is so difficult for 150,000,000 people to do anything as *individuals* that democratic control of the government cannot be taken for granted; it is necessary to study the means by which a theoretical popular sovereignty is converted into a functioning democracy.

Popular Illusions about Politics:

Americans have rarely taken full advantage of their fabulous opportunities in a democratic political system because they have been defeated and frustrated by a number of very elementary misconceptions and illusions about politics. Before we can cash in on the unlimited potentialities of our political system it is necessary to clear up the confusion of ideas about what we can do to get the results we want. What are the illusions about political action that have muddled our thinking?

OLD MAID'S VIEW OF POLITICS

- (1) Public spirited Americans have been brought up to be-

lieve *that they can accomplish almost anything by voting and that voting is nearly all that they can do about politics*. Nevertheless, despite an extensive discussion of the obligations of citizenship in schools, churches, public forums, and in the press, about half the potential voters did not take the trouble to go to the polls in 1948. For some reason the duty-to-vote concept of citizenship does not seem to have given great satisfaction as a cure for the ills of politics. Voting in itself is not a painful or difficult thing to do. Why is there so much passive resistance to the doctrine that people have a moral obligation to vote?

As a matter of fact, the proposition that people can accomplish anything useful merely by voting is demonstrably false and it is a mark of the sober good sense of millions of people that they have rejected it. *By itself, voting is not a very effective way of influencing the course of public policy*. The exhortation to vote is reduced to an absurdity when all people are impartially urged to vote, regardless of preference, party, or view, when they are urged to vote because voting is a good thing in itself, no matter what it is for, and regardless of the character, point of view, and allegiance of the candidates for whom the votes may be cast. This might be described as the "old maid's" view of politics. It will get us nowhere.

"PROFESSORIAL" VIEW OF POLITICS

(2) Americans who are not made ineffective by the old maids may be immobilized by the professors. Although we have produced by a very wide margin the largest body of professional political scientists in the world, it cannot be said that these scholars have provided us with a substantial body of doctrine for the direction of our political practice. If there has been any single idea that has underlain the great volume of professional publications, it has been that political science ought to be as much like the natural sciences as possible. Sometimes the natural science analogy has led scholars to assume that political behavior is fundamentally irrational or amoral, i.e., that it is something that people do without knowing why or without con-

sideration of the values and obligations at stake. If the political behavior of human beings is like the behavior of ants in an anthill, there is little point in trying to work out a theory of political action and appealing for its acceptance.

Sometimes scholars have been motivated by a limitless faith in the efficacy of "research" *per se*, regardless of what it may be about. This conception of research has led to the accumulation of a large store of miscellaneous "facts" that may overwhelm the reader but do not contribute greatly to his understanding. One is reminded of the comment made by the little girl who read a book about penguins. She said, "This book contains more facts about penguins than I care to know."

PREJUDICE AGAINST POWER

(3) Americans are sometimes emasculated politically by a prejudice against power, *per se*. Since politics is about power, people who are unwilling to come to grips with the idea of power are not likely to think effectively about politics. The object of politics is power, defined broadly as general control of the government (not as an end in itself but as a means for the accomplishment of useful purposes). Divorced from power, politics does not make sense. Politics is purposeful activity, revolving about power as an instrument for accomplishing certain ends, just as industry, commerce and agriculture are purposeful activities using certain means to achieve certain ends. Power, like money, is sometimes abused, but it is not intelligent to refuse to think about either because the consequences may be unpleasant. If *we* do not solve the problem of power, someone else will. The concept of politics as dealing with power and purpose implies that we can do something about it, that politics is a deliberate, planned activity. Once we see this we can begin to define how, when, where and what we do.

PREJUDICE AGAINST ORGANIZATION

(4) We sometimes defeat ourselves by our prejudice against political organization. We know that organization is essential

elsewhere, but in politics we glorify "independence" as if there were some special virtue in standing on the sidelines while others bear the brunt of responsibility. We do this in spite of the fact that in politics more than in any other kind of human activity numbers count; it is a collective activity. We cannot work out our destiny if we are not willing to overcome our prejudice against political organization.

"NICE PEOPLE" DON'T TAKE SIDES

(5) Related to the prejudice against organization is the notion that it is bad manners to "take sides," that neutrality and non-partisanship are the marks of superiority. Actually non-partisanship can easily degenerate into a disgraceful and immoral betrayal of the highest values in our society.

If we free ourselves of the prejudices and the illusions that surround politics, it should be possible to develop a plan of practical politics, a grand strategy on a scale commensurate with the work to be done.

Any attempt to find a political solution to the questions posed on page 11 leads inevitably to calculations concerning organization and numbers. Wisdom begins when we realize that the disabilities imposed on people by their numerousness can be overcome by organization. For this reason *democratic government is always managed by political organizations*. The democratic struggle for power is always won by organizations, just as football games are always won by teams, never by unorganized aggregates of individuals. Political organization overcomes the immobility of great numbers; it sharpens and clarifies the alternatives and helps fix public responsibility.

Futility of Political Independence

As far as this discussion is concerned "independence" is a mere synonym for futility. Indeed, the greater the number of independents, the easier it is for the organized voters to get control of the government. This is because organizations monopolize political power. Therefore, the study of political organization is

one of the most important activities in the world.

Effective organization is never something that merely happens to people; it results when people have some purpose about which they care enough to exert themselves. Organization is a way of doing things. Political organizations are like schools, hospitals, armies, or factories; the nature of organization is always related to the purposes of the organizers.

Political Planning

Implicit in this discussion is the *idea of political planning*. What is political planning? It is a deliberate attempt to get the results we desire. It involves an estimate of the proportions of the task to be done, the resistance to be overcome, the resources available, and the kind of organization required to do the job. Planning is, therefore, simply a part of the process of dealing with political problems intelligently. While the factors involved in any political calculation are complex, they are no more so than in many other situations in which we are accustomed to exercise foresight. As a matter of fact, all politics and all political organization require some kind of planned effort. What is suggested here is that *everyone* (even the public spirited people in the community) can increase the effectiveness of his citizenship by planning his political activities intelligently.

We have the power to choose (within limits) the kind of political organization we want to support and foster. This choice is important because the various organizations among which we may choose are not equally well adapted to our purposes.

Most Useful Political Organizations

What kind of organization is best? The answer depends upon what we want to accomplish and on our resources. Organizations created for one purpose are likely to be badly suited for another. Thus the organization of a pressure group is necessarily unlike that of a major political party because the resources and objectives of the two types of organization differ. Pressure groups are usually organizations of very small minorities designed to

promote some special policy or some exception to a general policy. The organization of a pressure group cannot look like that of a major party designed to mobilize twenty or thirty million voters to win elections and take over general control of the government.

The distinction is important. The principal choice we have, as far as organizations designed to meet our major problems are concerned, is between the major political parties, on the one hand, and the special interest pressure groups on the other. Let us examine, first, the potentialities of the pressure groups. These organizations mobilize small numbers of people who have a special interest in some aspect of public policy. Can they be easily used by public spirited citizens interested in the general welfare?

Pressure Groups Cannot Do the Job

Without attempting to pass judgment on the great multitude of special interest groups that are active in American politics, it is clear that these groups are inherently incapable of viewing the needs of the whole community at the very time when a broad outlook for the over-all management of public policy has become the most urgent requirement of American government. In the nature of things, special interest groups have an egocentric outlook on their relations with the community. Moreover, the sum of the excessive demands of all of the special interests is not likely to add up to the public interest and no automatic process is apparent by which conflicting claims cancel out, leaving a residue that might, for want of a better name, be called the public interest.

Another difficulty is that pressure groups are not distributed uniformly throughout all strata of our society. Special interest organizations are highly concentrated at the apex of the social and economic pyramid while something like an organizational vacuum exists in the great areas of the population at the base. Advocates of government by pressure groups unconsciously encourage, therefore, turning the government over to a relatively

small minority of highly organized and relatively well-to-do people, excluding from power the rest of the nation. The truth is that only a fraction of the interests of the American people ever get organized in the pressure system. The interests of the greatest number of people are rarely or never mobilized by pressure groups. It is obvious, therefore, that pressure groups designed to get exceptions to general policies in favor of little minorities are not well designed to promote general policy in the public interest on the scale contemplated in the present world and domestic situation. The pressure system is too narrow and too limited to provide the political base for a modern government.

Public Welfare Pressure Groups

Something must be said about a special category of pressure groups of great interest to public spirited citizens, the special organizations designed to promote the public welfare. Unlike the special interest groups, these organizations are not predominantly egocentric. Does the mere fact that they seek to promote the public interest make these organizations adequate political instruments for the purpose we have in mind? Questions fundamental to the concept of political planning must be asked. Does the organization have resources adequate to its objectives? If it does not, it is obviously a waste of time and energy to support it. Does it waste valuable political resources by duplicating the efforts or by dispersing the energies of its workers?

These are questions that may be asked properly of non-party special organizations designed to promote the public interest at some particular point, for a great multiplication of special organizations can be extremely wasteful. No civilization has ever produced so many public spirited citizens that it could afford to waste them in organizations which are not well adapted to make the best possible use of the energies and intelligence of this valuable minority.

As far as the minor parties are concerned, it is obvious that they cannot serve the interest of Americans in general programs

and policies because the whole history of American politics demonstrates that they cannot win elections.

Major Parties Best Promote General Interests

To anyone who shares the deep concern that is now felt by many people for the security and prosperity of the community and the creation of the kind of world we want to live in, it ought to be obvious that the type of political organization we need will have to be large and inclusive. It should be large enough to gain the support of a very substantial number of people, an organization that is able to *win elections and take over the government as a whole*. If we now realize that the general objectives of policy are really the ones which touch us most directly and



Wide World

Socialist Party Convention acclaims nomination of Norman Thomas. For all practical purposes, the major parties monopolize elections, and have the power to control the government. As a traditional "third party," the Socialist Party is seldom a *political* power.

profoundly, that no one can solve his private and individual problems in a society which is unstable or is disintegrating, and that our general stake in the government is greater by a wide margin than our interest in any special exception to public policy, our realization ought to reflect itself in the way we organize politically. What we need is an organization of the general interests, not an organization of the special and local interests. The very nature of the objectives we have in mind makes it necessary to control the government as a whole.

However imperfect the major parties may be, they have resources and potentialities which are useful to people who want to work for the general welfare. The potentialities of the party system grow out of the very nature of this form of organization. For all practical purposes, the major parties monopolize elections. As a result, they control access to the most powerful offices in the government. What is involved in these elections is *general control of the government*, precisely the concept and scope of power needed to support modern policy. The fact that the two major parties are usually able to exclude all minor parties from office and power makes them *important*; it means that the major parties can channelize the action of the electorate and sharpen the alternatives. Each of the major parties occupies a commanding strategic position resulting from the fact that it has only one opponent. The claims of the major parties to be considered in any attempt to plan the future of political organization are related to the fact that they are already the largest and most powerful political organizations in the field. They already control a powerful political apparatus able to mobilize 50,000,000 voters. Assuming that something can be done to improve the system, it is a fair statement of the situation to say that the major parties are more likely than any other political associations now in existence to meet the demand for a modern organization of politics.

Plea for Attitude Change Toward Parties

What this discussion of political organization boils down to

is a plea to public spirited citizens to reconsider their attitude toward the parties. The major political parties have suffered greatly from the disapproval and hostility of respectable and influential people. Enough has happened in the history of American politics to account for this attitude. Since a new situation has arisen, however, this may be the appropriate moment for the most highly respected people in the community to reappraise the potentialities and the uses of the party system and to reconsider their attitude toward party politics. If the parties are to be reoriented around a new kind of motivation and a new outlook on public affairs, much of the leadership of the movement must come from the talented minority that has traditionally boycotted them.

To understand why the traditional party organizations are badly prepared for their new assignment it is instructive to see what the purposes and functions of the old organizations were. American party organization originated at the time when local interests were dominant and national interests were relatively insignificant. Political organization has traditionally reflected this situation. The major political parties became loose confederations of state and local bosses while the national organizations of the parties were distinguished chiefly for their feebleness and lack of substance. Even more important than this, however, has been the general concept of policy sponsored by the parties, especially the policy of the party that dominated American politics during the greater part of this period. The Republican party was strongly opposed to the use of public authority to regulate the economy or to promote the general welfare by governmental means. A little reflection will make clear, however, that the kind of organization designed so to administer a government as to minimize its activities is likely to be very different from that designed to carry through a large scale governmental operation.

Parties Before Great Depression

What kind of party organization was best suited to the purposes of the dominant American party from the Civil War to

1932? The emphasis was on devices that might delay or obstruct: the presidential veto, the power of the president to refuse to enforce the laws, the power of the Supreme Court to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional, a cumbersome and difficult congressional procedure, the power of the Speaker of the House and the chairmen of the standing committees in both houses of Congress to delay legislation. While control of the presidency was important for these purposes, it is interesting to observe that the Republican party did not need to develop greatly its organization in Congress. Nothing like a disciplined and cohesive congressional party was developed because the chief object was simply to sit on the lid.

As a result, party policy did not usually express itself in terms of congressional party votes on legislation. Indeed, there was very little party legislation. This circumstance led President Lowell to conclude in a famous paper that American parties were not interested in *policies* but in the *personnel* of government. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The policy of the Republican party was well defined, but no legislation was required to implement it. As a matter of fact, the organization of the Republican party was beautifully adapted to serve the purposes of the party. It is obvious, however, that the pattern of organization needed to support Republican party policy before 1932 is very badly adapted to the needs of the present time. If possible, the Democratic party organization, which need not be described here, was even less well adapted to perform the stupendous task thrust upon it in the 1930's.

The Changing Party System

Since the Great Depression, and particularly since World War II, both major parties have overhauled their organizations extensively in view of the new situation. Both parties have greatly strengthened their national organizations and their procedures for dealing with the problems of national policy. Both have interested themselves in congressional elections in a way that suggests that the control of Congress has now become a focal

Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System

A summary of the report of the Committee on Political Parties of the American Political Science Association follows:

The Committee recommends that Americans reconsider their attitudes toward the major political parties in view of the new situation created by the revolution in public policy since the great depression. It suggests that a deliberate attempt be made to adapt the party system to the fact that questions of national public policy have now assumed an overwhelming importance. To this end the parties are urged to create national party councils for the consideration of party policy and for the promotion of more effective cooperation between party leaders in all branches of the government.

It is recommended also that the parties recognize the new importance of national policies by setting up party research organizations and by making an unprecedented effort

to educate their own members and the public in matters of party policy. The parties are urged to hold numerous conferences throughout the country to provide a basis for the cooperation of national and local party leaders in the execution of party policies and to give the party membership a greater opportunity to participate in the discussion of party policy.

To facilitate the efforts of the parties to adapt themselves to this new concept of their functions the Committee makes numerous recommendations for changes in election laws, for changes in the rules of the House and the Senate, for reform of the Electoral College, and the conduct of party business.

The report is called *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System*. It is published as a supplement to the September, 1950 *American Political Science Review* and will be published also by Rinehart, New York City, some time this Fall.

objective of the party struggle. Certainly the emphasis on congressional elections is now greater than it has been in the past. The so-called "purge" of 1938 served to direct public attention dramatically to the political role of Congress and events since 1938 have intensified public interest in congressional elections. Thus Mr. Truman's unprecedented campaign in 1948 was conducted almost exclusively on congressional issues while preparations for the congressional election of 1950 are even now being made on a scale heretofore unknown to American politics. Thus the parties seem to be on the point of reorganizing their congressional apparatus to tighten their control of the legislative process and convert party politics into party government.

Reasons for Changes in Party Politics

All of this has a bearing on the role of policy in politics. Why is it important that the relation between the parties and public policy be made more explicit than it has been in the past? The magnitude and complexity of the operations of the government make it necessary to formulate general policies as a means of control. This is true, first of all, at the highest level of personnel in the government itself. The government is now so large that Congress and the President and the chief administrative officers can no longer control it in detail; they must act through the establishment of general policies. In fact, it is impossible to *think* about the government broadly except in terms of policies. The work of the government can be *understood* only in these terms. When the heads of the government try to explain the operations of the government they find it necessary to talk about policies and programs.

A number of decades ago, when the principal concern of the dominant party was to minimize governmental activity, it was possible to talk about the personalities of the candidates on the assumption that the right man in the White House might be trusted, without an explicit mandate from the people, to use his office to veto any expansion of the scope of governmental activity. When nearly everyone agreed that the national government should be kept in its place there was little to talk about in an election campaign except personalities of the candidates. Now, however, the federal government does so much that is of great interest to everyone, and its activities are so new and complex that it is necessary to make a great effort to explain what the government is doing. Far more than ever before the discussion of public affairs now makes sense only in terms of policies and programs.

New Party Concern for Public Policy

For this reason the parties must now concern themselves with policies. The demand for a new kind of discussion of public affairs forces politicians to learn a new language and to master

a vast new universe of information and technology of which their predecessors were wholly innocent. Nothing is now so obsolete as the language used by politicians twenty-five years ago. A revolution in ideas is being forced on the politicians of both parties whether they like it or not and is the prelude to a reorganization of politics and the rise to power of a new elite.

The fact that the discussion of public policy is becoming the focal concern of the parties is likely to have a far-reaching effect on the internal procedures of the parties. It is becoming necessary for the parties to set up research organizations and to develop educational systems of their own. The whole concept of the relations between party members and their party organizations and leaders is likely to be affected by these educational activities. In the future the party process is apt to concern itself less with primary elections and nominations and patronage and more with the discussion of public affairs. Influence within the parties now depends more than it has in the past on the ability to understand what policy is about, and less on intrigues to get appointments. This is the point at which we may observe the emergence of a new kind of organizational worker, a worker who is interested in public affairs. It is now possible to organize the parties about the discussion of public affairs because the involvement of the public in the policies of the government has become a dominant factor in the lives of most people. The raw materials for a new kind of party organization await political leaders who know how to use them.

Traditional Party Organizations Now Obsolete

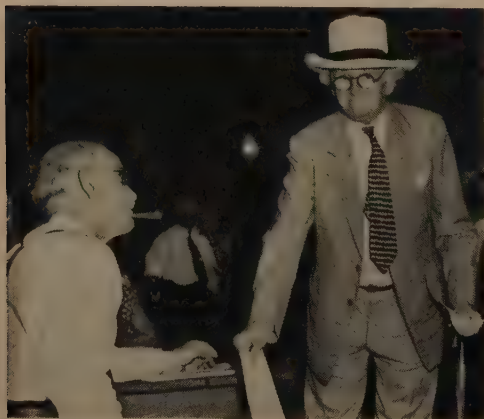
To cope with the political problems that originate in the new emphasis on national policy a purely local organization of politics is insufficient. The parties are, therefore, in the process of reorganizing themselves about national policies. The traditional party organization based on local bosses interested chiefly in spoils is now becoming obsolete. It is only necessary to mention the names of some of the bosses (Curley, Crump, Kelly and Hague) who have been overthrown recently, or to refer to the

astonishing decline of Tammany Hall in recent years to suggest that the pattern of political organization is changing. State bosses have all but become an extinct species. The old local bosses are incapable of dealing with the situations growing out of large-scale programmatic operations in public business. For a variety of reasons arising from the very nature of their organizations, the local bosses have been unable to move on the plane on which the parties must now organize themselves. The recent history of the parties indicates that the local boss is unable to adapt himself to the new situation, to exploit the new conditions of politics, to use the mass communications media, to mobilize public support, or to form the coalitions that will enable him to retain his supremacy within the party system.

The local party bosses have one thing in common with the pressure groups—neither is able to govern the country today. Neither has the resources to take over the government as a whole. They are, in fact, unable to think about the problems of the country as a whole and are unable to act in concert to find the popular support now needed by the government.

Sources of the New Party Leadership

What the gifted, public spirited, and influential minority in-



Tennessee political leader E. H. ("Boss") Crump shows his age as he casts his vote in the 1946 Democratic primary. The decline of the bosses, Curley, Crump, Kelly and Hague, as well as of Tammany Hall in recent years, suggests that the pattern of political organization is changing.

(Wide World photo)

terested in the general welfare thinks about these developments may determine the future of American politics. This is precisely the group that is able to furnish the leadership and do the hard work needed to give the parties a new direction. Is it unrealistic to suppose that the substantial and articulate minority now deeply interested in a large view of public affairs can play a role in party politics? The potentialities of this minority are almost unlimited.

Low State of Party Organization

American political organization is generally of a low order. Neither of the major political parties has an organization that covers the country. In many areas the organization exists only on paper, or is feeble and ineffective. Much of the organization is antiquated, lethargic, or feeble. However, this should not discourage anyone who wants to get into politics. On the contrary, it proves that the political opportunities of intelligent and energetic political workers are extremely great, for this is precisely the kind of organization in which it is possible to acquire influence most rapidly.

A Channel for Powerful Influences

Let us look at the parties as labor saving machines. Any advice that enables a worker to become one hundred times as productive as he might be otherwise is worth thinking about. Merely to become a party worker is to become one of a minority of perhaps 500,000 people who run the two major parties. The members of this minority are perhaps three hundred times as influential as the non-workers. The existing party organizations are, therefore, the greatest multipliers and amplifiers of political energy ever invented. Party workers constitute perhaps one-third of one per cent of the population of the country. This is the minority that controls our major political apparatus. It is extremely doubtful if any other form of human activity yields so large a return for the effort as work in the parties. Few other avenues of social action open to Christian laymen in America promise so much for human welfare in this period of world crisis.

For Whom Does the C.S.A. Speak?

*By Ernest Lefever**

For Christians who believe in making their faith effective in the political order, Professor E. E. Schattschneider in the preceding article has this advice: participate actively in one of the two major political parties and work for broad social objectives which embrace the welfare of all. If Protestant Americans take this advice seriously they will become active, both as individual citizens and in cooperation with social action groups in their local churches and communities. They will work through state and national organizations. Denominational agencies, like the Council for Social Action, will act not only on specific political issues, but will encourage church members to engage in party politics on the local, state and national levels.

A Prophetic Witness vs. Consensus

The right of an individual Christian to participate in politics is generally accepted today. But political action on the part of Protestant churches or official church agencies raises certain questions which require careful attention. Does the social action committee of the Middletown Congregational Church have a right to take a position on a controversial political issue? On the national level does the Council for Social Action have the right to make a political pronouncement, especially if such action should run counter to the majority viewpoint among Congregationalists? For example, can the C.S.A. support a rent-control measure if a poll would show Congregationalists against it? With what kind of authority does any Protestant church group speak? Does this authority depend upon consensus? Is it possible for a church to make a prophetic witness in the social order if it must reflect the majority opinion of its members whose

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ethical values unfortunately are more often shaped by their economic class and social status than by the Christian faith? We now turn to an examination of these questions.

The C.S.A.'s Mandate from the Church

In the realm of political action the C.S.A., like any official Protestant social action agency, has a dual responsibility. It is responsible to the churches on one hand and to the state on the other. The C.S.A. is authorized by the General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches to help "make the Christian Gospel more effective in society, national and world-wide," in which the duty to make a Christian witness in political life is implied. The C.S.A. has a mandate to "intercede directly in specific situations." Some of the C.S.A.'s statements on particular social questions have been criticized for not reflecting the consensus of Congregational opinion. By what authority does the C.S.A. engage in political action which may run counter to membership opinion? The source of this authority is three-fold:

- 1) According to the Protestant principle of the priesthood of all believers, the official social action agency, like any individual or unofficial group, has the right to participate in political affairs in harmony with its own conscience as long as it makes clear that it represents only itself.

- 2) The official agency, in contrast to the unofficial, has a special responsibility to the church which created it and supports it. The first duty of the C.S.A. is to operate within the mandate given it by the General Council. On a deeper level the C.S.A. fulfills its responsibility by appealing to a higher authority which is acknowledged alike by leaders and members, by officials and laity. This higher authority is God who commands the loyalty of all. The ethical standards of justice, order and freedom are rooted in this common allegiance. It is in the practical application of these accepted values and in the choice of middle axioms (principles between universal values and

specific strategies) that sharp differences occur. Despite such differences, the C.S.A. can represent Congregationalists in so far as the Council represents the will of God revealed in Jesus Christ. A parallel from American politics will illustrate this principle of a common loyalty. A Congressman does not represent his constituency simply by reflecting the common denominator of opinion, but by serving honestly and often with more information at his disposal than the ordinary voter the values of justice, freedom and security in which he and his constituency believe. He represents his people by appealing to the transcendent values of the American Dream.

3) The third source of authority for the C.S.A. is the appeal to the developing consensus of Christian social thought, the normative character of which is being increasingly recognized in the Protestant world. The effectiveness of this authority depends upon the degree to which the social messages of the ecumenical conferences are made known and accepted among the leaders and members of the churches. These pronouncements representing the thought and experience of world-wide Christianity are developing principles and middle axioms which can serve as a basis for a more united and more relevant Protestant witness within the political order. They can serve as an effective check on the narrow class interests of certain churches and groups within Protestantism.

Overcoming Narrow Class Interests

A common loyalty to God is the final authority for political action on the part of any church agency. This does not mean that officials have a special gift of the holy spirit which enables them to make infallible pronouncements on social questions. A Protestant group can never claim that its view is the final or only Christian position. The Christian faith can never be identified with any particular social, economic or political program.

The C.S.A. cannot, and in actual practice does not, ignore the members of the Congregational churches. Protestants believe



Canada Pictures (Toronto)

Plenary session of Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in Toronto, July, 1950. In ecumenical and denominational bodies Protestant laymen and clergy come to decisions on controversial issues through free discussion.

in the necessity of commending the truth as they see it to one another in the spirit of love. It is the clear duty of laymen to make their views known to the C.S.A. through the regular channels of church government as well as in the direct exchange of ideas and opinions. The leaders must likewise communicate their social insight and analysis to the membership. Such exchange carried out in common devotion to one Lord will create not only humility and mutual respect, but will lead to greater agreement on the practical level.

While church leaders do not have a special gift of the holy spirit, there are certain reasons why many professional workers, especially in social action agencies, are able to see above the narrow class interests which unhappily characterize large segments of their denominations. Their training included some study of social problems and social change. They are aware of

the social teachings of the church, and especially the developing thought of the recent ecumenical conferences. Their reading on current affairs is not restricted to publications representing one particular class. Their very position on a social action committee gives them additional experience in seeing political problems in a broader perspective than the average layman can hope to have. These are some of the reasons for the gulf which often exists between the social thinking of the man in the pulpit and the man in the pew. We must hasten to add, however, that many ministers reflect suburban values and often lag behind their congregations in seeing the church's responsibility for helping to stimulate and direct social change in the interests of greater equality, security and freedom for all.

The Church's Duty in Politics

Having defined the duty of the official social action agency to the churches, we now turn to its responsibility in the political sphere. In making a Christian impact on the commonwealth, the C.S.A. has three major duties, each of which carries its own peculiar kind of authority.

1) The primary duty of the C.S.A. is to speak to Congregationalists and other Christians, clarifying political issues in the light of the Christian faith and urging individuals to be active and responsible citizens. This is by far its most important task. The authority of such activity in the political order is rooted in the integrity of individual responsibility. It is the authority of a man in Mississippi casting his vote in accordance with his conscience. It is the authority of a mother in California writing her Congressman about better health care.

2) The second duty of the C.S.A. is to speak for the Congregational churches on current issues when it is given a specific mandate from the General Council to do so. It has a right to make such pronouncements to the press or to present them before appropriate Congressional committees, if it makes clear that it speaks in behalf of the General Council and not for every

Congregationalist. Statements authorized by the General Council should be used to stimulate membership thinking as well as to influence legislators or executives in the government.

3) The third and most controversial duty of the C.S.A. is to speak in its own name on specific political issues. Such action is legitimate as long as the safeguards outlined above are carefully observed. This function expresses itself mainly in lobbying activities in Washington, carried on through the Legislative Committee. It should be clear that the Legislative Committee, or any other committee for that matter, never makes a representation to the government in its own name, but only in the name of and with the endorsement of the C.S.A. Even when speaking in its own name the C.S.A. is responsible to the General Council and through it to the membership. The Board of Directors of the C.S.A. is elected democratically by delegates to the General Council. If the C.S.A. "misrepresents" its constituency, the membership can elect different directors with a different policy.

The Church's Authority in Politics

When a staff member presents the view of the C.S.A. or the General Council on income tax or the Point IV Program, what authority does such a statement have in the eyes of a Congressman or Department official in Washington? How does this authority differ from that of the Roman Catholic Church, the CIO, the NAM, or the Farm Bureau Federation?

To answer these questions it will be helpful to point out three kinds of political authority exercised by various interest groups in Washington—ballot-box authority, the authority of influential contacts, and moral authority. These kinds of power are not mutually exclusive and some pressure groups have all three. They can be defined briefly:

1) *Ballot-box authority* is enjoyed by groups whose voting behavior can make a difference at the polls. This is the most powerful political force in a democracy. The CIO speaks with

such authority, which depends upon a unified and disciplined membership.

2) *The authority of influential contacts* characterizes groups such as the NAM, the American Medical Association and the Real Estate Lobby which have ready access to the mass media of communication and other powerful contacts. They can influence the influential in the government, but they cannot deliver votes like the doorbell-ringing CIO-PAC. The Roman Catholic Church has influential contacts both in the government and outside. It also has a powerful vote-delivering capacity.

3) *Moral authority* does not depend either upon ability to deliver votes or to influence the influential, but upon the merit of its own position. It emphasizes reason and appeals to the values of security, justice and freedom.

It is clear that the C.S.A. and other Protestant groups have primarily moral authority. The C.S.A. cannot deliver a bloc vote because it does not represent a uniform and disciplined membership. No Protestant church can ever become a monolithic pressure group because its emphasis on the individual conscience would prevent it from dictating uniformity. Further, the Church of Christ can never identify itself completely with any particular social, economic or political program. Nor does the C.S.A. enjoy the authority of influential contacts to any politically significant extent. (It should be mentioned here that influencing the influential is not wrong in itself; too often, however, such influence is exerted in behalf of narrow interests.)

When the C.S.A. presents a statement before a Congressional committee, it has a moral authority based upon three significant sources: 1) *The appeal to reason and good sense*: The C.S.A. is not in a position to throw its political weight around. It appeals simply on the merit of its intrinsic argument. 2) *The appeal to the American Dream*: The C.S.A. representative is an American citizen who, along with the Congressmen whom he is addressing, has a loyalty to certain value symbols—justice, fair play, freedom, etc.—often referred to as the American Dream.

His statement carries the authority of this common loyalty. 3) *The appeal to the Lord of History*: The C.S.A. representative is not only an American; he is a Christian. This gives him an even higher court of appeal, the will of God as interpreted by the Christian faith. This reference is valid only to the extent that it is honored consciously or subconsciously by the Congressmen. We can assume, however, that widespread secularization of the American culture has not completely obliterated a reverence for and obedience to divine authority, often where such authority is least acknowledged. In short, while lacking Gallup-poll consensus, the C.S.A. pronouncement does have a three-fold authority—the merit of its argument, its appeal to the American Dream, and its reference to the will of God.

In conclusion, we must recognize that the authority of any group or individual, Protestant or otherwise, in political affairs is limited by human weakness and self-interest. Perfect insight into God's will for society is not possible, but this is no excuse for failing to engage in vigorous political action according to the light given. The C.S.A. must maintain an attitude of genuine humility, recognizing that its own activities, the church it serves and the state itself stand under the eternal judgment of God.

On To Action

E. E. Schattschneider in this *Social Action* points to the major political parties as the place where participation by conscientious citizens is most needed. This is a bitter pill for many of us to swallow. Party politics is partisanship in the extreme, the habitat of "politicians," the scene of power tactics and of "interests masquerading as principle."

It is a strange world to most Americans, but one where justice hangs in the balance. For those who are unfamiliar with its ways, a useful beginner's guide is the 10-cent pamphlet of the League of Women Voters (726 Jackson Place, N.W., Washington 6, D.C.) entitled, "You Can Be the Life of the Party." It is a good primer for your social action committee or a basis of discussion for a men's club, a women's society or a ministers' association. Along with this issue of *Social Action*, it makes an excellent kit for education in citizenship. Further reading could take you into the American Political Science Report on Parties summarized on page 23, and Schattschneider's book on *Party Government*.

Sincere Christians will not shirk the immediate and necessary task of building stronger, more responsible political parties. Elections are won in the precincts, in our own neighborhoods by those of us who will organize, telephone, and canvass for votes. Here is a task close and immediately at hand in this election year. Will you join in offering help to a major party in the Fall elections as the first step to long-term, effective participation in American politics?

Ray Gibbons